

The Jewish Museum

New York: 1962-64

An Acoustiguide Tour

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Acoustiguide Inc.

225 West 35th Street

15th Floor

New York, NY 10001 (212) 279-1300

STOP LIST

100. Introduction
101. Mark di Suvero, *Untitled (hungblock)*, 1962
102. Roy DeCarava, *Pepsi*, 1964
103. Claes Oldenburg, *Braslette*, 1961
104. Harold Stevenson, *Eye of Lightning Billy*, 1962
105. Rudi Gernreich, *Monokini*, 1964
106. Andy Warhol, *Two Marilyns*, 1962
107. Robert Rauschenberg, *Coca-Cola Plan*, 1958
108. Louise Nevelson, *Sky Cathedral's Presence I*, 1959-1962
109. Marisol (Marisol Escobar), *Self-Portrait*, 1961-62
110. Chryssa, *Projection Letter F*, 1958-60
111. Bob Thompson, *The Golden Ass*, 1962-3
112. Lenore Tawney, *Hanging, Number XXIV*, 1963
113. Miriam Schapiro, *Dialogue*, 1962
114. Richard Stankiewicz *Untitled Face*, 1961
115. Faith Ringgold, *Civil Rights Triangle*, 1963
116. Emma Amos, *Untitled (for Spiral Exhibition)*, ca. 1964
117. Kamoinge Workshop, *Portfolio No. 1*, 1964
118. Andy Warhol, *Jackie Frieze*, 1964
119. Marjorie Strider, *Girl with Radish*, 1963
120. Yayoi Kusama, *Chair*, 1962
121. Donald Judd, *Untitled* , 1963
122. Andy Warhol, *Empire*, 1964
123. George Maciunas, *Photographic Ballet*, 1964
124. Jasper Johns, *Painting with Two Balls I*, 1962
125. Robert Rauschenberg, *Costumes for Antic Meet*
126. Frank Stella, *Marrakech*, 1964
127. Robert Rauschenberg, *Glider*, 1962

100. Introduction

CLAUDIA GOULD: Hello. My name is Claudia Gould, and I am the Helen Goldsmith Menschel Director at the Jewish Museum. It's my pleasure to welcome you to *New York: 1962-1964*.

This exhibition explores a three-year period when the Jewish Museum was—as The New York Times has noted—the epicenter of New York's contemporary art scene. The museum's director, Alan Solomon, organized a series of exhibitions dedicated to what he called "The New Art"—work by artists who lived in New York and engaged with the city in new ways. Visually, their work is diverse, but they shared a desire to make art from everyday life. In 1964, Solomon highlighted the "new art" on the world stage at the 32nd Venice Biennale. Robert Rauschenberg, an artist Solomon had championed, won the International Grand Prize in Painting. That victory cemented New York's position as the center of the art world.

During Solomon's tenure, the Jewish Museum also provided a home for Jewish gallerists and collectors. Many of Solomon's partners and colleagues would go on to become art world influencers, assembling comprehensive collections of post-war American art and joining museum boards.

All of this took place at a time of dizzying social change in America. The economy flourished, flooding homes with consumer products and mass media. The threat of nuclear war loomed. Activists fought for racial justice, women's liberation, and gay rights. And the country mourned the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. That tumultuous energy made its way into the art as well.

New York: 1962-1964 was conceived and curated by Germano Celant, the renowned art historian, critic, and curator who passed away in 2020. The exhibition, designed by Selldorf Architects, and the accompanying book, designed by 2x4, have been realized according to Germano Celant's vision in collaboration with Studio Celant in Milan and our team at the Jewish Museum.

Thank you for joining us. I hope you enjoy the exhibition.

101. Mark di Suvero, *Untitled (hungblock)*, 1962



SAM SACKEROFF: Mark di Suvero's sculpture *Hungblock* from 1962 really looks like New York in the process of being built and being torn apart. In that sense, the work captures the dynamism of the city.

NARRATOR: Sam Sackeroff, Lerman-Neubauer Associate Curator at the Jewish Museum in New York.

SAM SACKEROFF: Di Suvero made *Hungblock* from scraps of metal and also these huge hulking pieces of driftwood that you can imagine him sourcing from the area around his studio, which bordered the East River. And these different pieces are displayed in a very dynamic way. You have these colliding planes, sharp angles, a huge strut of yellow painted steel arcing out in one direction, another column of steel painted black arcing in another, and then you have enormous pieces of wood suspended from wires. All of this gives the sculpture a sense of unpredictability that was at the heart of what New York was for Mark di Suvero. It was an environment that was very real, very imposing, very visceral, but it was also full of change.

NARRATOR: In 1962, the same year di Suvero completed *Hungblock*, he co-founded the Park Place Group, an artist's cooperative named after a partially abandoned building on Park Place in lower Manhattan, far from the established galleries uptown.

Members of the group gathered there to trade ideas, show their work, and listen to jazz.

SAM SACKEROFF: Di Suvero and other members of the Park Place Group wanted to explore the grit, the grime, and muscularity that New York presented in their eyes. On several occasions, members of the group actually showed their work on the roof of the five-story building at 79 Park Place. They actually got to exhibit their work in the city itself, surrounded by the sound of traffic and pedestrians on the streets below.

102. Roy DeCarava, *Pepsi*, 1964



NARRATOR: Roy DeCarava's *Pepsi* from 1964 is one of the photographer's iconic works, offering a glimpse of everyday urban life. Joshua Guild, Associate Professor of History and African American Studies at Princeton University.

JOSHUA GUILD: You see this man who appears to be lifting a crate of Pepsi bottles, but it's sort of ambiguous. We don't actually know, is he resting? Is he straining? The ambiguity, as well, I think, is we don't know much about the man. What draws my eye most prominently is both the muscles in his forearm and the wristwatch, and they're beautiful. So, it's a beautiful photograph, but it is certainly a photograph that invites additional looking and speculation.

Some of the things that you see in the image are the foregrounding of the Pepsi bottles, but also the advertisement in the background suggests to me something of post-war life and post-war consumerism, the availability and the ubiquity of consumer products.

I think New York is at an interesting crossroads in the early 1960s. Harlem is perpetually overcrowded and has crumbling infrastructure. Increasingly, central Brooklyn, Bedford-Stuyvesant, are the anchors of Black New York. It's, I think, both a moment of some possibility, of some hope, there's the extension of the kind of post-war expansion of opportunity, but there's increasing frustration about the limits of that expansion.

There's also the growing Black freedom struggle in the South, but there's protest activity and demonstrations in New York and throughout the urban North, and so this is also, I think, part of the backdrop of DeCarava's work.

103. Claes Oldenburg, *Braselette*, 1961



CLAUDIA GOULD: This plaster sculpture of a woman's undergarment ripples with energy. Its texture is bumpy, its shape is raw, and its surface is splattered with paint. The artist Claes Oldenburg wanted to infuse that kind of vitality into every aspect of daily existence.

Oldenburg included *Braselette* as part of an event, or Happening, he called *The Store*. The Happening took place at an actual storefront that Oldenburg rented in downtown Manhattan where he sold paint-and-plaster reconstructions of everyday consumer items to art-world initiates and pedestrians walking by. He filled shelves with tennis shoes, coffee cups, and slices of pie, displayed just as you'd find them in any New York bodega.

The Store was a groundbreaking concept that engaged with everyday life in a new way. Shortly before he opened the Store, Oldenburg wrote: "I am for all art that takes its form from the lines of life itself, that twists and extends and accumulates and spits and drips and is heavy and coarse and blunt and sweet and stupid as life itself."

In 1962, Oldenburg exhibited plaster works like *Braselette* along with a new series of lumpy, sewn and stuffed sculptures at Richard Bellamy's Green Gallery on West 57th Street. They too depicted common objects like ice cream cones and hamburgers, and encouraged viewers to actively engage with the world around them.

104. Harold Stevenson, *Eye of Lightning Billy*, 1962



NARRATOR: The sitter for *Eye of Lightning Billy* was Roy Dale Billy, a man of Choctaw Indian descent who frequently modeled for Stevenson. Stevenson represents Billy's pale blue-green eye, framed by his cupped hand and a wisp of black hair, at a monumental scale that is almost overwhelming. This work was included in the landmark exhibition, *The New Realists*, which opened at the Sidney Janis Gallery on East 57th Street in 1962. It's now hailed as the first exhibition of Pop Art in America. Curator Sam Sackeroff:

SAM SACKEROFF: He was interested in the richness of encountering a body as a body, and not looking away. Stevenson was trying to suggest that there was a lot of richness in seeing a human eye as a human eye. That just that simple act of recognition, of seeing what was in front of you, was hugely rewarding and something that had been overlooked in previous art.

NARRATOR: Harold Stevenson was born in Oklahoma and arrived in New York in 1949. One of the first people he met in the city was Andy Warhol. Like Warhol, Stevenson soon became involved in the city's vibrant gay scene, a theme that is reflected in his work. The same year that Stevenson made *The Eye of Lightning Billy*, he also made *The New Adam*, a thirty-nine-foot-wide nude painting of the actor Sal Mineo, who had starred opposite James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause* and had become an underground gay icon.

SAM SACKEROFF: Stevenson became known for his very large, very sensuous paintings of male sitters. A lot of these paintings brought forth a kind of delight in the male form, and in that way, were rather daring contributions to an emerging homo-social art scene in New York, an art scene was becoming much more confident about queer politics, queer sexuality, and gay life.

105. Rudi Gernreich, Monokini, 1964



CLAUDIA GOULD: Here's the designer Rudi Gernreich speaking in 1971.

RUDI GERNREICH: I think more and more people are discovering that the adornment of the body really hides too much of the real characteristics of people and I think eventually this will be understood by paring down and paring down and the real self will come out. That's why I feel we will come more to wearing a type of uniform because then the real individual comes out. And this way, there's so much hiding behind things. There's still tremendous hang-ups, I think.

CLAUDIA GOULD: There were, indeed, "hang-ups" about Gernreich's design for what he called a "Monokini." This wasn't just a garment, it was a provocation, the swimsuit that sent shockwaves around the world.

Gernreich designed the Monokini when a magazine editor asked him to imagine the swimsuit of the future. Paradoxically, while the breasts are exposed, the bottom of the suit is very conservative, and it was made from the same thick wool used for Victorian bathing apparel.

It might be tempting to read the monokini as a product of the Playboy-era male gaze, but Gernreich also designed a bottomless bathing suit for men and unisex ensembles. He said the monokini represented "freedom—in fashion as well as every other facet of life." The model Peggy Moffitt, who was photographed in the Monokini, argued that his "aim was to free the breast rather than glorify it sexually."

106. Andy Warhol, *Two Marylins*, 1962



NARRATOR: Andy Warhol made this double portrait of the actress Marilyn Monroe, soon after her death on August 4, 1962.

Jennifer Sichel, Assistant Professor of Contemporary Art and Theory at the University of Louisville.

JENNIFER SICHEL: Anyone looking at this painting in 1962 would have been looking at it with the knowledge of her tragic death of a drug overdose at the forefront of their mind and the relationship between death and celebrity, and the question of how and whether celebrity contributed to the tragic death of Monroe.

When Warhol made this painting, he was working on a series that came to be known as the "Death in America" paintings. And in addition to these paintings of Marilyn, he was also making paintings of car crashes, of suicides, of the electric chair, of race riots in Selma. And I think that Warhol was very interested in not just death, but the reproduction of death in the newspapers, in the magazines, on TV, and what happens when this suffering, when this death is reproduced over and over again. He's interested in how that very reproduction speaks to our suffering and creates our suffering.

NARRATOR: Warhol was fascinated by the way celebrities like Monroe used mass media to construct public personas and incorporated many of those techniques into his own life and work.

JENNIFER SICHEL: For a gay artist in the sixties, there's the constant need to perform one's identity based on how one is interacting with the public, based on whether one is in a professional context or in a private context, and so as a gay man in New York, Warhol's constantly performing a persona, and then this idea, it's become central to his artmaking.

107. Robert Rauschenberg, *Coca-Cola Plan*, 1958



NARRATOR: Robert Rauschenberg moved from Texas to New York in 1949. He spent much of the '50s and early '60s moving between lofts throughout Manhattan, making groundbreaking works that involved materials he salvaged from the streets and alleyways around his studios and that changed the course of American art. Curator Sam Sackeroff.

SAM SACKEROFF: To me, Robert Rauschenberg's *Coca-Cola Plan* captures the sense of fun that Rauschenberg brought to the process of composition.

NARRATOR: Rauschenberg wanted to work in what he called the “gap” between “art” and “life.” In *Coca-Cola Plan*, he used everyday objects like glass soda bottles and covered them in thick swaths of paint.

SAM SACKEROFF: And it's really that dualism, the ability to take his society and his surroundings seriously, while also leaving that society and those surroundings open for spur of the moment intervention that makes Rauschenberg such an exciting figure at the time.

NARRATOR: *Coca-Cola Plan* was featured in Rauschenberg's first museum retrospective, which Alan Solomon organized at the Jewish Museum in 1963. Although Rauschenberg was already well-known, the exhibition confirmed his status as one of the most important living artists. It also established the Jewish Museum as an influential venue for cutting-edge contemporary art in the city.

SAM SACKEROFF: I always think about visitors to the Jewish Museum in 1963 seeing a work like *Coca-Cola Plan*, learning to make new connections between the familiar objects involved in its construction, and then taking that skill back out onto the streets and making new connections between the bits of scrap material that they would have seen walking uptown along Fifth Avenue or cutting through the park. And that generosity, that ability to generate new meaning from the stuff that you see around you on a day-to-day basis, was something that Rauschenberg delighted in. He really wanted to invite viewers to participate in his art. The art wasn't only for him, it was for all of us.

108. Louise Nevelson, *Sky Cathedral's Presence I*, 1959-1962



CLAUDIA GOULD: Louise Nevelson literally made art from the city. She scavenged abandoned buildings for architectural debris, wooden crates, pieces of furniture, whatever she could find. Then she assembled the fragments into massive sculptures, which she painted a single color, usually white or black.

But Nevelson wasn't a native New Yorker. In fact, like many of the artists who lived and worked in New York during the early 1960s, she moved to the city from elsewhere. Nevelson was born to Jewish parents in Ukraine. Her family fled persecution, moving first to Rockland, Maine before settling in New York in the 1920s. As Nevelson explained, the city was central to her life and art.

LOUISE NEVELSON: New York is my mirror. New York for me is unlimited. Just totally unlimited. And no matter where I go, I just want to come back to NY. Because some of us could not fulfill ourselves elsewhere. Some people need a wide stage. When you encompass the whole city it becomes a great 20th century work of art.

CLAUDIA GOULD: *Sky Cathedral's Presence I* is informed by Nevelson's personal experience of urban displacement. In 1958, her brownstone on East 30th Street was demolished to make room for a New York University–Bellevue Hospital complex. It was part of the city's so-called "urban renewal" campaign. The domineering city planner Robert Moses oversaw the campaign in which developers purchased properties and evicted low-income and minority tenants.

The table legs, bits of banisters, and other debris serve as records of a neighborhood, each item a kind of archaeological fragment.

109. Marisol (Marisol Escobar), *Self-Portrait*, 1961–62



NARRATOR: Marisol's *Self-Portrait* features seven heads, two rows of human teeth, a pair of breasts, and six bare legs sprouting from a massive block of wood. The anatomical puzzle, made from cast-off objects scavenged from the city streets, displays the artist's trademark wit. Kristina Parsons, Leon Levy Curatorial Assistant at the Jewish Museum.

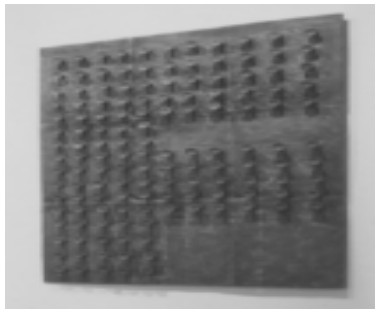
KRISTINA PARSONS: Each of these faces has a different appearance, foregrounding the complexity and multiplicity of identity. She does say later in life that all of the work she does is a kind of self-portrait. She is really exploring different aspects of personality and experience, many of which, subtly and less subtly, critique societal norms, especially as a woman and as an artist.

Artists in this period are engaged in a wide variety of social and cultural issues, including feminism. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* is published in 1963, and becomes broadly influential, not only for women at large, but particularly women artists in this period.

As all of the greatest superstars do, Marisol went only by her first name. She has talked about how removing her last name is part of this rupture of this patrilineal power of her father's surname.

NARRATOR: Marisol Escobar was born in Paris to Venezuelan parents and settled in New York in 1950. Between 1962 and 1964, she exhibited her work at Eleanor Ward's Stable Gallery on East 74th Street. Reviewing one of Marisol's last shows there, *New York Times* critic Brian O'Doherty wrote, "Everything has been hauled into a sawed-up, hammered world, where reality and abstraction, objects and their painted images, all lock into a solid kaleidoscope in which her face appears and disappears, never smiling, a mystery like Garbo."

110. Chryssa, *Projection Letter F*, 1958-60



CLAUDIA GOULD: The artist Chryssa was fascinated with the codes of visual communication. She produced prints based on the classified ads in newspapers, made neon signs, and studied the geometry of individual letters. Here an enormous letter “F” projects from a hulking slab of cast aluminum.

Born in Athens, Greece, Chryssa moved to New York in 1955 and immediately fell in love with the city. She explained, “America is . . . intoxicating for me. Believe me when I say that there is wisdom, indeed, in the flashing lights of Times Square. The vulgarity of America as seen in the lights of Times Square is poetic, extremely poetic.”

Chryssa’s interest in the letters and signs that she saw lining the city’s streets coincided with the rise of American mass media and consumerism. These themes were also being taken up by her peers and would define what came to be known as Pop art. *Projection Letter F* was featured in a major early Pop exhibition, *Americans 1963*, which opened at the Museum of Modern Art in May 1963.

But while many Pop artists wanted to make paintings and sculptures that could be easily understood, Chryssa’s work was often deliberately obscure. She explained, “I have always felt that when things are spelled out they mean less, and when fragmented they mean more.”

111. Bob Thompson, *The Golden Ass*, 1962-3



NARRATOR: Bob Thompson based this painting on a black and white etching by the 18th century Spanish painter Francisco Goya. Curator Sam Sackeroff.

SAM SACKEROFF: But he's flooded it with this visceral, raw color. That was something that Thompson did repeatedly in his work. He took compositions from European old masters that he then would use as structures within which he would improvise and riff, following the techniques of jazz musicians, and transform them with these hot tones of vermillion, orange, indigo, violet—radiant, radiant colors.

Many of Thompson's paintings are not only thrilling, but at times almost frightening, sort of bursting with an energy that feels unpredictable. And that was intentional. Thompson wrote, "I paint many paintings that tell me slowly that I have something inside of me that is just bursting, twisting, sticking, spilling over to get out, out into souls and mouths and eyes that have never seen before. The monsters are present now on my canvas, as in my dreams."

NARRATOR: Thompson was born in Louisville, Kentucky, and moved to New York in 1958. He left New York for Europe in 1960, but returned to the city in 1963, renting a loft on Rivington Street near The Bowery. It became a gathering place for Black luminaries like the musician Ornette Coleman and the poet and publisher LeRoi Jones.

SAM SACKEROFF: Bob Thompson was politically conscious from an early age, in a way that really informed his artistic practice. Thompson never made what we would call protest or activist art, but his engagement with the European canon can also be seen within the context of the Civil Rights Movement, which was becoming more and more urgent during the period that he worked on paintings like *The Golden Ass*. I always think of his infusion of color into these compositions by white European artists as a kind of desegregation of the European canon.

112. Lenore Tawney, *Hanging, Number XXIV*, 1963



NARRATOR: Lenore Tawney's approach to weaving is sensual and lyrical, with many of her large-scale pieces intended to be viewed in three dimensions. Tawney is part of a formidable vanguard of American women artists who brought international recognition to the possibilities of contemporary fiber arts in the 1950s and '60s.

Curator Kristina Parsons:

KRISTINA PARSONS: She produced *Hanging, Number XXIV* at a pivotal point in her career. She had just begun using linen yarn, which shifted her compositions to a muted palette. She also developed a custom reed for her loom, which allowed her to produce these complex vertical compositions at a monumental scale.

This piece is also a testament to the expanded art practice that the New York loft spaces permitted. These were often former industrial buildings, which provided large, open spaces where artists' practices could really grow in size and scale. Tawney could hang pieces from the ceiling, so rather than being a textile that would hang against the wall, such as a tapestry, these pieces could be seen in the round and circumnavigated.

NARRATOR: Tawney moved to New York City in 1958 and settled in a lower Manhattan neighborhood called Coenties Slip, now the Financial District. Tawney lived and worked first in a loft located on the waterfront that had been used for shipping and trade, and later nearby on South Street. These loft spaces were not built for residential occupation, but they were large and cheap, and a number of artists, including Robert Indiana, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Youngerman, and Agnes Martin, established a collaborative community there. In this exhibition, you can see Martin's painting, *Little Sister*, a black and white grid, studded with brass nails.

KRISTINA PARSONS: They explored parallel themes of spirituality and both developed their own distinct approach to the grid, albeit in different mediums: Martin through painting on canvas and Tawney through works such as this one, which she called "woven forms."

113. Miriam Schapiro, *Dialogue*, 1962



CLAUDIA GOULD: Miriam Schapiro's work explores themes of feminine power and identity, and you can see those at play here.

Schapiro was a member of the "Second Generation" of the Abstract Expressionists. Most Abstract Expressionists were men, and in Schapiro's painting she combines allusions to the work of her male peers like Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko with her own repertoire of forms, many of which emphasized feminine themes.

One form that is repeated throughout the painting is an egg-like shape that Schapiro includes three times in different ways on the canvas. Schapiro would return to this form throughout her career as part of her interest in exploring what it is to be an artist, woman, and mother.

Dialogue was included in an important 1963 exhibition at the Jewish Museum, called *Toward a New Abstraction*, curated by Alan Solomon. At the time, the painting was titled *The Game is Yours*.

Four years later, in 1967, Schapiro moved to California where she continued exploring questions of female identity by co-founding the Feminist Art Program at the California Institute of Art with fellow artist Judy Chicago.

114. Richard Stankiewicz, *Untitled Face*, 1961



NARRATOR: Here's Richard Stankiewicz describing his process:

RICHARD STANKIEWICZ: I work in a rather spontaneous way, everything is improvised, nothing is planned or preconceived. There are no drawings or models made beforehand. It's very much shooting on the wing.

NARRATOR: This life-sized column of rust-covered scrap metal may suggest a human form. The valves and rivets on one side imply a face, but the work hovers between abstraction and figuration. The curving metal forms orbiting the top and bottom of the sculpture suggest that it's still in the process of being made, as if the artist paused in the middle of making the work.

SAM SACKEROFF: I think that that was intentional on Stankiewicz's part.

NARRATOR: Curator Sam Sackeroff.

SAM SACKEROFF: By suspending things this way, he seems to suggest that his decisions are provisional and that these scraps, indeed any piece of junk culture, can be seen in many ways, put to many uses.

NARRATOR: Stankiewicz was born in Philadelphia and moved to New York in 1949, where he became a pioneer of a style that became known as "junk art." The term "junk art" was coined by the curator and critic Lawrence Alloway. As Alloway explained, "junk art" celebrated "the way artists are like other people, sharing objects, sharing the environment, literally."

SAM SACKEROFF: What was American about Stankiewicz's engagement with junk was its democratic spirit. There's this conviction that lurking just underneath the surface, or just off to the side, in the bits and pieces of garbage lining the streets, there was all sorts of untapped richness, untapped potential, this idea that society always had new things that could be made out of overlooked or thrown off bits of itself.



CLAUDIA GOULD: *Civil Rights Triangle* is part of Faith Ringgold's landmark "American People" series, which she began in 1963 at the height of the Civil Rights movement. In the painting, Ringgold depicts five men arranged in a tightly packed composition with the white figure at the top. Ringgold discussed the painting in a 2016 interview:

FAITH RINGGOLD: You see that guy in the middle there? The head of the NAACP was white. Understand that. There was a lot of white leadership in the Civil Rights Movement. And it had to be talked about because it was amazing to see how difficult that must have been. The NAACP had a white leader and I wanted to record all of that. Because it did change and it has changed. But that's the way it was.

CLAUDIA GOULD: The painting highlights the differences in socio-economic class among Black activists. The four figures in the center of the painting are dressed in suits or collegiate sweaters, while the man on the lower left wears an undershirt, suggesting working class Americans who may be excluded from power.

Ringgold did not shy away from depicting the uncomfortable realities of the 1960s.

FAITH RINGGOLD: Because imagery was exceedingly important. Were you gonna have any white people in your painting? Or were you gonna have Black people? I could do whatever I wanted because nobody was paying any attention to me anyway. And that was very good, in a sense, that nobody was paying attention to me because I didn't have anything to worry about.

CLAUDIA GOULD: Faith Ringgold continued working on the "American People" series into the late 1960s, commenting on the struggle for racial justice as it developed. Born in Harlem, Ringgold is a lifelong activist in the fights for both racial and gender equality. Her poignant work speaks to her experience as a Black woman and has in recent years garnered the recognition she was denied earlier in her career.

116. Emma Amos, *Untitled (for Spiral Exhibition)*, ca. 1964



KRISTINA PARSONS: Emma Amos created this work for the first and only exhibition mounted by the Spiral Group. The exhibition was unified by a color palette of black and white. This piece has bold strokes of black and white, very energetic dots and smudges, patches of paint, that all collide together in this abstracted composition.

NARRATOR: The Spiral Group was a New York-based collective of Black artists, who came together in response to Martin Luther King's 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The significant but short-lived group held meetings at 147 Christopher Street in Greenwich Village on the banks of the Hudson River, where they also mounted their one and only show.

The artists of the Spiral Group were committed to Civil Rights, but they had divergent ideas about the best way to make art. Some members, like Reginald Gammon, were dedicated to figuration, producing works that recorded scenes of protest. Other members, like Norman Lewis, remained committed to abstraction. Amos worked in both styles and remained politically engaged throughout her career.

KRISTINA PARSONS: Emma Amos's practice was versatile and revolutionary. She worked with print, paints, and textiles, and she also used color often to reckon with issues of race and gender. She was both the youngest and the only woman member of the Spiral Group, and she felt alienated from the lack of diversity in feminist circles and the lack of female leadership in the Civil Rights Movement.

117. Kamoinge Workshop, *Portfolio No. 1*, 1964



NARRATOR: These works were made by members of the Kamoinge Workshop, a photography collective founded in Harlem in 1963. Its members felt frustrated by the failure of popular media to represent the full range of Black life. They were also interested in the role of Black artists in American society.

Historian Joshua Guild:

JOSHUA GUILD: On the one hand, there's a sort of school of thought that says that Black artists have a responsibility to speak to the conditions of Black struggle and then there's another school of thought that wants to free Black artists from those responsibilities to pursue their own artistic vision, and particularly to pursue abstraction as a possible mode of expression.

And I think in the Kamoinge Workshop, you see those debates represented and reflected in the work. If we take a look at, for example, Larry Stewart's image of the two tricycles. It's a beautiful image that uses shadow and light and creates this very interesting geometry, and it opens up the possibility to think, who do these tricycles belong to? Where is this? Is this a representation of childhood and possibility and whimsy and play? Is this about the limitations of childhood within an urban landscape, the relatively few places where a child could safely ride their tricycle? It leaves these things open in a way that I think is reflective of some of the great energy and dynamism of the Kamoinge Workshop.

One of Kamoinge's founders was a photographer named Louis Draper, and he described their work as documenting, quote, "hot breath streaming from Black tenements, frustrated window panes reflecting the eyes of the sun, breathing musical songs of the living." It's such a beautiful quote, and I think what it represents is the pursuit of truth, which is to say that we want to show the reality of things: tenement living, which is difficult and hard, the frustrated window panes suggests the limitation, but the eyes of the sun, the musical songs of the living, which is the possibility, the beauty within the difficulty. And Kamoinge, I think, was after both of those things, and I think, above all, was seeking not just truth, but also beauty, but beauty that was rooted in something real.

118. Andy Warhol, *Jackie Frieze*, 1964



CLAUDIA GOULD: On the day President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, November 22, 1963, a columnist for *The New York Times* articulated the sense of national grief, writing, “America wept tonight, not alone for its dead young President, but for itself.” For many Americans, Kennedy had been a symbol of idealism and hope. When he lost his life in a senseless act of violence, a brighter future for the country also seemed to have been lost.

Andy Warhol made this remarkable work, *Jackie Frieze*, in the immediate aftermath of the assassination. It features images that Warhol found in newspapers and magazines showing First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy before and after the assassination. His arrangement of the images resembles a strip of celluloid film. In some, Jackie is smiling openly, unaware of what is about to occur. In others, she appears pensive and stoic. The repeated images suggest how many Americans experienced that national tragedy, refracted through mass-media.

119. Marjorie Strider, *Girl with Radish*, 1963



NARRATOR: Marjorie Strider's paintings often included what she called sculptural “build-outs,” highlighting parts of the female anatomy objectified in popular culture. Here, she emphasizes the lips and mouth, biting a radish.

This painting was included in an early Pop Art exhibition at the Pace Gallery, called the First International Girlie Exhibit or the “Girlie Show.” It featured a cohort of mostly male artists whose work engaged with depictions of the pin-up girl in popular culture. Strider was one of only two women artists included in the exhibition along with Rosalyn Drexler.

KRISTINA PARSONS: There is this ambiguity between, is it a celebration? Is it a critique? How does it sit within the broader landscape, which is very much at the forefront of the exhibition's claim that it dealt seriously with these clichés of pin-up magazines and pin-up culture. Of the 10 artists included in this exhibition, I think most produced work that continued to fragment, sexualize, and objectify the female body.

In Marjorie Strider's case, there is an engagement with the power dynamics of voyeurism. She combines a kind of sly humor and a little bit of bite. Strider often features women who are staring deliberately out at the viewer, rejecting the one-directional gaze of an often male viewer consuming a female's image.

Numerous critics dismissed the work that was included in the “Girlie Show” as nothing more than this tasteless elaborate joke, which they called this, quote, “mock serious comment on our culture.” Critics said, artists have a right to create these absurdities, and it's your right to ignore them.

120. Yayoi Kusama, *Chair*, 1962



NARRATOR: Yayoi Kusama transforms an unremarkable armchair by covering it in plush phallic forms, which seem to replicate of their own accord, bubbling up, bending, twisting, and sticking out at all angles. The work is part of her "compulsion furniture" series. Curator Sam Sackeroff.

SAM SACKEROFF: She's taking everyday objects like chairs, like ladders, like tables, and those familiar objects become the arena for these very personal fixations to play out—related to mental illness, to sexual obsession, or to subjective experiences that perhaps even Kusama herself couldn't quite articulate.

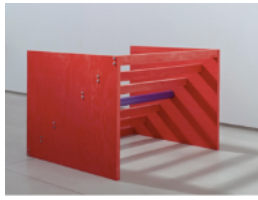
Unlike other female artists at the time, who embraced their sexuality and for whom that sexuality was part of a feminist liberation, Kusama had a much more ambivalent relationship to sexuality in general, and to gender, including both male and female gender roles.

NARRATOR: Kusama made this work while she was living in a loft on East 19th Street, using materials that she sourced from a fabric wholesaler on the first floor. The sculptor Donald Judd lived in the same building. Their work could not be more different, but Kusama and Judd became close friends.

SAM SACKEROFF: So, this relationship with Judd, who was an early supporter, really is the exception rather than the rule. Kusama could have used more friends like that at the time, especially given her talent and the influential role she played in the New York scene. Although female artists were certainly becoming more prominent, it still was a boy's club in many respects.

NARRATOR: Kusama's work was profoundly influential in New York during the 1960s, but the male artists who adopted aspects of both her techniques and style gained far more commercial and critical success than she did. Without the support she needed to stay in New York, Kusama left the city in the early '70s, returning to her native Japan.

121. Donald Judd, Untitled, 1963



NARRATOR: Donald Judd began making free-standing work in 1962, working from his loft studio on East 19th Street just north of Union Square. Neither paintings nor sculptures, the works belonged to a category that Judd called “specific objects.” He used that term to draw attention to the physical qualities of the works themselves. This untitled work from 1963 is one of the largest specific objects Judd made. Curator Kristina Parsons.

KRISTINA PARSONS: It has these intersecting planes between the large plywood panels at the sides, each of which are adjoined by this ascending series of wooden beams. The side planes and the wooden beams are painted this red color, but a single beam in the center is a purple aluminum tube, so both a different color and a different material. He's interested in the ways in which these differences in colors and materials sharpen and define the contours and angles of a piece that allow you to really see the junctions and the intersections most clearly.

Judd placed this piece directly on the floor, rather than on a pedestal, to engage with what he called “real space,” or a category of experience and relationship between work and the larger environment that he thought had otherwise been neglected.

NARRATOR: Untitled is one of eight works that was included in Judd’s groundbreaking solo exhibition at the Green Gallery in December of 1963.

122. Andy Warhol, *Empire*, 1964

NARRATOR: At eight hours and five minutes in length, and featuring just one camera setup, Andy Warhol's *Empire* is unlike any other movie. To make the film, Warhol set up a camera on the 41st floor of the Time-Life Building in Rockefeller Center, pointed it at the Empire State Building, and began filming just before sundown. Nearly all of the "action" happens in the first hour.

Art historian Jennifer Sichel:

JENNIFER SICHEL: You see the clouds moving across the sky, the sun setting, and you see the lights flick on of the Empire State Building. After the sun sets, all you really see is small lights flickering back and forth. Occasionally, when Warhol and his associates need to change the reel, you see a faint reflection of them in the window of the building.

What Warhol is really interested in here is how boredom then gives rise to new textures of experience. So, as you get bored watching nothing much happening, you start to notice all sorts of different things. You start to notice the grain of the film. You start to notice the sound of the machine.

NARRATOR: Warhol was a ubiquitous figure in the New York art scene of the early '60s. In 1964, he moved into a loft in an old industrial building at 231 East 47th Street. He covered the space in silver foil and paint and called it "the Factory."

JENNIFER SICHEL: In the Factory, a lot of things were always happening. They were working together to silkscreen painting after painting. A lot of partying happened. There were often film projectors going and there were people filming, and so the distinction between being in the movie and watching the movie kind of falls away. It was a place where a lot of gay and lesbian and all sorts of other queer folks could, quote, unquote, "misfit" together. It was a space where the kind of binaries of the world fell away in the '60s.

123. George Maciunas, *Photographic Ballet*, performed during Fully Guaranteed 12 Fluxus Concerts, Fluxhall, 359 Canal Street, New York, March-May 1964



NARRATOR: This series of nine black and white photographs of a building facade captures *Photographic Ballet*, a Happening that took place at 359 Canal Street in Soho in 1964. A group of artists lug cardboard boxes up and down a fire escape. The city's architecture becomes their stage.

Curator Kristina Parsons:

KRISTINA PARSONS: These performances, especially the ones that spilled out onto the streets, incorporated buildings, street furniture, passers-by, all of these things really collapsed the distinctions between what represented art and what represented daily city life.

NARRATOR: Ninotchka Bennahum, Professor of Dance and Performance Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

NINOTCHKA BENNAHUM: A Happening isn't something you'd go into a theater, you buy a ticket, you sit down and you watch somebody entertain you, but rather it requires the viewer to finish the piece. The viewer is responsible for the meaningfulness and the content of a performance. It's the relationship between the viewer and the performer, and it's a marriage. Sometimes a good marriage, sometimes a bad marriage, if the work is boring. It's a confluence of the political, the visual, the aural, the social, and aesthetic philosophy.

NARRATOR: *Photographic Ballet* was staged by a group called Fluxus, founded in Europe by the Lithuanian artist George Maciunas. It was performed as part of a series of events organized to establish Fluxus in New York.

NINOTCHKA BENNAHUM: Fluxus is a group of radical artists, many disciplines, so poetry, literary writing, physical movement. Fluxus, to flow. Nothing is stable. Performance now is destabilized. It cannot be repeated. It's different every night. Art is now infinite. It's not precious. To be able to take the daily news, to take what you ate for breakfast and turn it into material for new art. It doesn't live in a museum. It cannot be owned. Fluxus is a recalibration of artmaking.

124. Jasper Johns, *Painting with Two Balls I*, 1962



NARRATOR: Jasper Johns's *Painting with Two Balls I*, from 1962, is not actually a painting. It's a lithograph based on a painting Johns made two years earlier. Johns often made variations on his own work to keep their meaning open to new interpretations. With this work, Johns was responding to the generation of Abstract Expressionist painters who preceded him. These artists were often perceived as heroic, macho, and, in Johns's words, "ballsy." Curator Sam Sackeroff.

SAM SACKEROFF: And in Jasper Johns's case, all of that self-seriousness is gone. It's replaced by a joke: *Painting with Two Balls*. He was not at all interested in confession. He wasn't interested in ideas of authenticity. It has to do with trying to move away from the privileged status of the artist.

He invites all of us as viewers to start asking questions, not in order to get to any answer, but to sort of linger in the ambiguity about artmaking in general. What can a painting be? Is a painting still a painting if the canvas is split? Is a painting still a painting if you put two balls in it? What he wants to do is to remind us all of how rich and complicated just looking at something can be. He invites us to remain comfortable in the fact that none of us really know the answer and that the act of looking itself has to be enough.

NARRATOR: This print was shown in the retrospective of Johns's work organized by Alan Solomon at The Jewish Museum in 1964. Although Johns was already a celebrated figure, that exhibition established him as one of the preeminent post-war American artists. In his review of the exhibition *New York Times* critic Stuart Preston summed up Johns's project, writing matter-of-factly, "He wants us to look."

125. Robert Rauschenberg, Costumes for *Antic Meet*, 1958



NINOTCHKA BENNAHUM: Rauschenberg believes in this confluence of the physical, i.e., dance or performance, with the visual.

NARRATOR: He designed these costumes for *Antic Meet*, a dance choreographed by Merce Cunningham with music by John Cage. Dance Scholar Ninotchka Bennahum:

NINOTCHKA BENNAHUM: *Antic Meet* is a satirical comedic work. It consists of 10 overlapping scenes. Dancers pass each other in chance meetings with various parts of these costumes at different times. It really is about the randomness of life and the idea of the ordinary becoming extraordinary. There's an interdependence of sound, music, costume, the idea that costume contributes to the spatiality and the actual choreography, the movement of the body.

NARRATOR: Cunningham broke with modern dance tradition. His dances incorporated everyday movements and had no narrative. So, Rauschenberg's costumes—the parachute dress, tattooed undershirt, and fur coat you see here—didn't tell a story or define a character. In fact, Rauschenberg developed his ideas for the costumes before Cunningham had even begun choreography. Instead, his costumes enhanced the different ways the body could define space during the performance.

NINOTCHKA BENNAHUM: Rauschenberg understood that the parachute dresses on the women were really meant as a trick, they layer the body to take away any specific gender and to make it a kind of unusual object, like a mushroom, or a flower, something that isn't human. It's an exaggerated costume. They have a sense of the bulbous, this feeling that they could weigh you down, although it certainly doesn't inhibit any of the movement. They have a life to them, a buoyancy.

126. Frank Stella, *Marrakech*, 1964



CLAUDIA GOULD: Frank Stella arrived in New York in 1958, fresh out of college and began making large-scale, geometric paintings. He wanted to get away from any sense of illusionistic space or atmosphere, which he perceived even in abstract paintings.

FRANK STELLA: I wanted people to be able to see the paintings directly and unequivocally, in other words, the emphasis on the surface and the rigid quality of the paint is to keep people from moving around in the painting, so that the paintings are non-atmospheric, non-resilient, so there's no room to roam around. So, there's almost only one way you can see the paintings. The real point of the paintings is that they are supposed to be self-evident, and they are supposed to be easy to see and easy to understand.

CLAUDIA GOULD: This painting, *Marrakech*, belongs to a series based on Moroccan tiles. Stella methodically applied paint in alternating bands of fluorescent red and yellow, separated into four triangular quadrants that begin at the edges of the canvas and meet in the center. The work makes a forceful visual impact, emphasizing the object-like quality of the canvas. At the same time, the color seems to vibrate independent of the painting's material support.

Stella's innovations were immediately recognized. Before the age of twenty-five, he had been featured in the groundbreaking exhibition *Sixteen Americans* at The Museum of Modern Art. *Marrakech* is one of six paintings by Stella that Alan Solomon included in the United States Pavilion at the 1964 Venice Biennale.

127. Robert Rauschenberg, *Glider*, 1962



CLAUDIA GOULD: Robert Rauschenberg's painting *Glider* captures the energy of American mass media in the early 1960s. Its palette of black, white, and gray recalls smudged newspaper ink or the flickering screen of a black and white TV. You might recognize some of the images—a NASA Spacecraft at top left; below it a human hand—but others may be hard to discern.

SAM SACKEROFF: In that sense, *Glider*, like many of the silkscreens that Rauschenberg produced, really is about the dynamism of American society in the 1960s. It's not about any one particular event. Instead, it's about the heterogeneous, contradictory energy of American culture in general at the time.

CLAUDIA GOULD: Rauschenberg flipped through popular magazines to find photographs and transferred them to the canvas using silkscreens. He then added swaths of gestural paint.

SAM SACKEROFF: And that combination of found images and applied paint really defines Rauschenberg's practice throughout his career. And by combining those two regimes of images, he really did draw attention to how the individual and the world around him were inextricable. Rauschenberg, as an individual person, is encountering and being encountered by the world around him. And it's that encounter, that exchange, that is the subject of his art.

CLAUDIA GOULD: In 1963 the United States government asked Alan Solomon to oversee the American pavilion at the next year's Biennale in Venice. Solomon was invited to participate because of the exhibitions he had organized at the Jewish Museum. And he took the opportunity to highlight the work of artists from New York. *Glider* was one of the most exciting pieces that Solomon included.

SAM SACKEROFF: And he called out Rauschenberg, in particular, writing that Rauschenberg's work demonstrated "an optimistic belief that richness and heightened meaning can be found anywhere in the world, even refuse found on the street."

CLAUDIA GOULD: In many ways, Rauschenberg's success at the Venice Biennale marked the culmination of a remarkable period in art and culture in New York, in which Alan Solomon and the Jewish Museum played an important role. When Rauschenberg was awarded the Grand Prize, it underscored the arrival of New York as the global capital for contemporary art.